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ABSTRACT

The author describes the conceptualization, planning, and construction of a creative playground at the Glendaal Elementary School in Scotia, New York. Imaginative use of second-hand materials (tires, railroad ties, wood spools, drainage pipes) and volunteer labor enabled costs of the project to be kept well under $300.00. Careful planning resulted in the development of a creative physical education learning center and increased community involvement in school affairs. (MJB)

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CREATING A RECYCLED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION LEARNING CENTER FOR $200.00

One way to develop an outdoor learning center that is child centered, educationally productive, and a sure way to maintain parental and community support at minimal expense.

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SP 011 987

Presented to: Eastern District AAHPER Convention

Baltimore, Maryland

Presented by: John J. Haher, Principal
Glendaal Elementary School
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Scotia, New York

March 3, 1978

The Glendaal School's unique and creative recycled learning facility is now into its 3rd year of use. Community, state, and national recognition has been given to the project with emphasis on:

- Drawing the School-Community together.
- Utilizing minimal resources to their fullest. Comprised primarily of recycled materials, the project cost between $200-$300.
- The project being carried out in basically one day.

State and National publications have given coverage to the Glendaal facility. Additional recognition will be given in the 6th edition of the nationally known textbook Teaching Physical Education in the Elementary School by Dr. Maryhelen Vannier to be released this winter.

A detailed slide presentation, accompanied by a large model and posters, depicting specific areas of the learning center, its actual construction, and some uses is available.

A comprehensive and detailed photo publication, which can serve as a "cookbook", regarding the step by step planning, construction, and utilization of the Glendaal Facility will be available in April for $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Interested persons should contact

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CREATING A RECYCLED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Developing innovative and creative learning experiences for children during this period of inflation, dwindling school funds, and increasing numbers of austerity budgets (this year approximately 29% of the school districts in NYS are on an austerity budget) are providing school administrators with a difficult challenge. These times are also showing evidence of school community relations being on a decline due to a reduction of positive parental involvement in their child's school. How can we as educators overcome the many obstacles that we face in our efforts to keep our schools child centered, educationally productive and maintain the parental support necessary at a minimal expense?

The staff and parents at the Glendaal School in Scotia found a way. We developed a creative outdoor learning environment from recycled materials.

Recognizing that typical school playgrounds consist of apparatus such as swings, slides, jungle gyms etc. that are expensive to acquire and relatively limited in their use we designed and created a facility that would allow for creativity and pupil imagination while at the same time provide some basic skill development in the area of visual perception, coordination, body awareness, and cooperation. This type of playground can have a direct relationship with an elementary school program. Primary teachers can use it to help develop basic readiness skills. Intermediate grade teachers can utilize it for such activities as expressive creative role playing. The physical education teacher can utilize it as part of his/her curriculum for such activities as perceptual development, obstacle courses, coordination skills, climbing, following of directions, self discipline etc. All teachers can use it as a simple way to let children vent their frustrations and built up energies while at the same time doing something constructive.

Through the effort, resources, and financial support of the Glendaal School PTA a large multi activity playground was constructed utilizing railroad ties, cable spools, culvert pipes, tires from trucking tractors and earth removers, beams, utility poles, a row boat, sand, logs, a large boulder, and a couple of pieces of equipment that no one else in the district had a need for.

A PTA committee was organized to help formulate basic designs and plans, "scrounge" the necessary material, and assemble the work force. Stimulating ideas were discussed with staff and parents, books and articles were reviewed, outside resource people were consulted including personnel from S.E.D.

When all plans were developed, designs and sketches completed, the materials located, a work force was assembled and a date was selected for construction. Volunteers, including mothers, fathers, and the boy scouts were assigned various tasks to work on. Approximately 40 persons volunteered services, materials and/or labor. A time chart was prepared for having the materials on hand, preparing the ground, and constructing the facilities.

Construction of the creative playground took place on a Saturday. Some volunteers began at 7:30 a.m. by loading 70 railroad ties on two trucks and delivering them to the school. Shortly after 8:00 a.m. the other volunteers were on hand at the site to begin spreading sand, assembling tires, and placing poles. By 10:30 a.m. the railroad ties arrived and the project was well under way. A hot lunch was provided by the PTA for each volunteer and by 4:00 p.m. Glendaal had a new learning center which consisted of:

- a 24 foot balance beam
- a tire pyramid
- a railroad tie maize and sandbox
- a walk on top ladder
- a tire maize
- a log cluster
- serpentine stepping logs
- a cable spool jungle
- a climbing jungle gym which was already on the site

Sand was spread throughout the entire facility for safety and maintenance. Additional facilities such as

- a tire mountain
- the Blarney Stone
- a rowboat
- large culvert pipes

were constructed later. The tires were painted bright colors to make them more attractive and appealing.

A flag pole which flies the "Glendaal Cardinal" was assembled in the railroad tie maize to provide a unique feature for this playground.

Because most of the materials and labor was donated the cost for the construction of the playground was well under $300. A portion of the costs could have been eliminated if some of the best laid plans had not gone astray - such as finding out at the last minute our district post hole digger could not dig large enough holes.

Creative playgrounds are becoming increasingly popular for children of all ages. While providing for group interaction they also offer something excitingly different from the standard playground equipment generally associated with schools. Its design allows children to "explore their own ideas". Fun and exploration have long been recognized as major ingredients in the formula for learning. The railroad tie maize becomes a fort. The tire pyramid is transformed into a mini trampoline, the balance beam becomes a bridge spanning continents. The tire jungle simply provides a peaceful place to sit and think.

And not only can this type of facility have a positive impace on the schools curriculum a very needed by-product is also most evident - that of bringing parents together for a constructive long range project that they can visibly associate with and share with others.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

I. Develop the concept of what you want your playground to look like.

Consider:

A. Size of potential site
B. Location of potential site
C. Drainage of potential site

II. Develop or construct a 2 or 3 dimensional model of what you expect the project to look like.

III. Share your ideas with staff, PTA, or others that will be part of making it happen. GAIN THEIR SUPPORT FIRST. Be certain to include the school maintenance staff in the planning - mowing, maintenance, etc. need to be considered.

IV. Select a Steering Committee to:

A. Develop time chart for carrying out each phase of the project.

B. Locate and scrounge materials

C. Assemble the work force and designate working assignments.

D. Provide the nucleus for solving all problems.

E. Arrange for all equipment and tools to be on hand for construction.

F. Publicize the concept and work and materials needed.

G. Follow through with all thank you acknowledgements.

H. Solicit a small amount of working capital for nuts, bolts, etc. that come up at the last minute.

V. Select a day, while the weather is reasonable, to construct the playground.

A. It is more difficult to get people back for a 2nd or 3rd time.

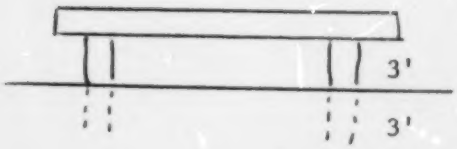
B. PUT THE COFFEE on bright and early.

C. Provide a good lunch - this keeps the workers there. If they go home for lunch there will be a significant decrease in the afternoon work force.

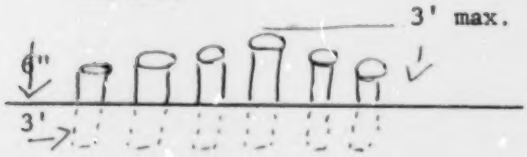
VI. Develop basic safety rules for each individual facility.

CONSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS
(Mason Sand Spread Throughout Facility)

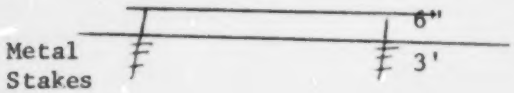
Balance Beam

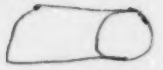


Poles Set In Serpentine Pattern



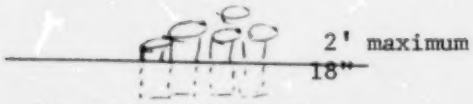
Walk on Ladder
(Horizontal Ladder with Metal Stakes Welded to Frame)





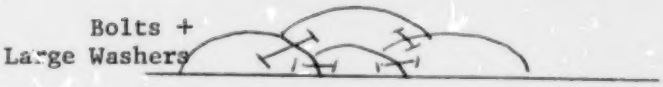
Slight Hole To Keep Culvert From Rolling

Log Cluster
(Logs on Tree Stumps)

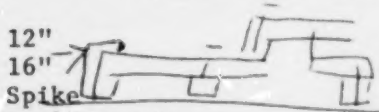


Can Be Set In Cement

Tire Mountain
+
Tire Pyramid
+
Tire Maize

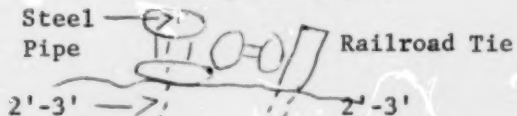


Railroad Tie Maize



Each Tie is Secured to the Next

Cable Spool Jungle



Spools Wedged Tightly Together

RESOURCES

PLANNING

- PTA
- Staff
- Maintenance Department
- District Administration and Board of Education
- State Education Department, Bureau of Physical Education

WORKERS

- PTA
- Staff
- At least one maintenance man
- Interested members of the community
- Boy Scouts - Girl Scouts (earn Community Service badge)

MATERIALS OBTAINED FROM

- Parents
- District
- Niagara Mohawk
- Telephone Company
- Cable T.V.
- Local farmers
- Industrial Park
- Concrete Culvert Company
- Town Highway Department
- Tire Company
- Major Construction Firm